

Deadly Store Of Toxin Still At Edgewood

By Bill Richards
Washington Post Staff Writer

Dozens of deadly bacteriological agents were transferred in 1970 by the Army from its Biological Warfare Center at Ft. Detrick to Edgewood Arsenal, Md., and are still there, Army officials said yesterday.

A list of bacteriological agents, including "a little bit of everything" produced at Detrick was prepared by scientists there ostensibly for testing of the Army's electronic detection systems for enemy biological agents, Donald Falconer, a former Detrick official said.

The agents and the detection equipment were shifted from Detrick to Edgewood following a ban in 1970 on biological warfare stockpiles by former President Nixon. The ban exempted material to be used for defensive or safety research. The Army has never made clear just what quantities of the deadly agents were saved from Detrick.

Falconer, who was director of commodity development at Detrick, said the army's bacteriological detection equipment was "in the horse and buggy stage" compared to its bacteriological weaponry at the time of the shift.

Another former senior official from Detrick said yesterday, however, that few bac-

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teriological agents were ever actually used in the testing of the detection equipment.

"Generally speaking," said Riley Housewright, the former scientific director at Detrick, "the work done in those tests (of detection equipment) involved simulators rather than actual toxins. They were testing equipment, not agents, and I'm not sure what they needed all that toxin for."

An Army spokesman said yesterday that only "research quantities" of the toxins were transferred from Detrick to Edgewood but said he did not know how much toxin was actually involved. The spokesman said that research involving the toxins has been going on at Edgewood since 1970, and is still in progress.

Included among the toxins is 2.8 grams of shellfish toxin, one of the most deadly toxins known, according to experts in the field. Na-

than Gordon, a former CIA scientist, told a Senate Intelligence Committee this week that the CIA had been given 11 grams of the toxin from Detrick at the same time that the transfer was being made to Edgewood.

Gordon said that five grams of the toxin were offered unsolicited to the CIA by another civilian official in the Detrick project at the time of the Edgewood transfer and were eventually accepted.

Senate Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) said after the testimony that, according to some estimates, one-half ounce of the toxin could be used to kill as many as "hundreds of thousands" of persons.

Since the ban on offensive bacteriological production at Detrick, the Army's budget for defensive research has grown substantially. The budget increased from \$3 million in fiscal 1972, to \$6.1 million in fiscal 1973. The Army spokesman said last night he did not have complete figures on the latest defensive biological research budget available.

The Army spokesman did not say for what the shellfish toxin or any other types of toxins were being specifically used at Edgewood. Falconer, while acknowledging the Army prepared a list of toxins for transfer to Edgewood, declined to say what kind of toxins were involved.

"There's no reason why it should be made public until the Army decides to make it public," he said.

Falconer said that some persons in the Detrick program had wanted to save the toxins because in addition to their use in testing detection equipment "they were the products of processes built up through many painstaking hours and much money."

However, he said he never heard anyone specifically talk about disobeying the or-

der by President Nixon issued in 1970.

That order was the second one that Mr. Nixon issued involving biological warfare. Mr. Nixon's first order on Nov. 26, 1969, did not specify that toxins themselves were to be gotten rid of, and Falconer said Army officials made immediate plans at the time to save all the toxin at Detrick. Other reports have indicated that toxins at Detrick included botulism poison and stocks of anthrax, Q fever, equine encephalitis and tularemia, an infectious disease.

Those plans were only dropped, he said, after the second order by Mr. Nixon was issued to destroy all stocks of biological poisons on Feb. 14, 1970. Immediately after, he said, the list of toxins for transfer for defensive research at Edgewood was prepared by Detrick officials for the Army.

The Army spokesman did not make clear yesterday whether the shipment of toxins transferred to Edgewood included cultures containing microorganisms for producing more toxin.

Housewright, the former Detrick scientific director, said yesterday that if the microorganism cultures were available, any amount of toxin may be produced. "Any time you have the culture for microorganisms," Housewright said, "you have the potential for making anywhere from a drop to a tubful of toxin."